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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
4 October 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: De Gaulle and the Lyons Speech

1. The twin themes of national unity and national independence which recurred again and again in De Gaulle's speech at Lyons on 28 September have more current pertinence to French domestic political developments than to France's international relations. The speech, which offered nothing new on either foreign or domestic affairs, was basically a reiteration of a broad range of national objectives. Its scope, tone, and timing suggest that De Gaulle is preparing the ground for a presidential election campaign.

2. The aggressively nationalistic flavor of this speech largely results from the overall impact of a number of specific points which De Gaulle had not previously strung together in a single short presentation. Its essence is concentrated in his expression of France's "intention to act in such a way that no one but ourselves can become masters of our destiny."

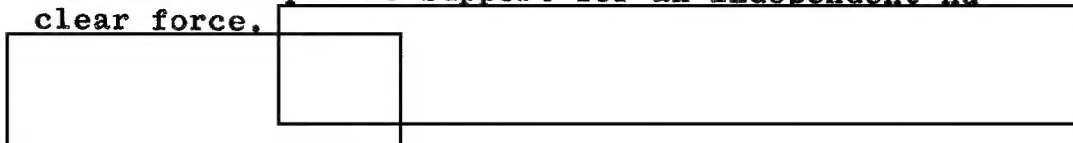
3. Each foreign policy point is presented in relation to its influence on France and the way it can be used to advance French interests. De Gaulle recognizes the value of the UN as "forum," but denies it any competence as a "superstate" empowered to impose its decisions on matters concerning France. He considers the Atlantic Alliance to be "completely necessary," but rejects "any system in its organization" which would take away from France the control of French forces and responsibility for the defense of France. He accepts the need to unite the six EEC states into an organized Europe, but

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insists that these states must avoid "annihilating themselves in who knows what kind of integration which would deliver up to one or another of the foreign hegemonies a Europe without a soul, without a backbone, and without roots."

4. The references in the Lyons speech to nuclear development stress both De Gaulle's desire for freedom from dependence on the "Anglo-Saxons" and the technical advantages the French economy would derive from its own program. Tying nuclear development to economic progress is probably aimed at mollifying domestic opposition to the nuclear program. In a possibly related development a few days after the Lyons speech, an article appeared in the semi-official National Defense Review, which cited acquisition dates for various key components of the nuclear program several years earlier than any previously given. The article may have been intended to emphasize France's nuclear potential and to build public support for an independent nuclear force.



5. Analysis of those parts of the Lyons speech in which De Gaulle holds France up as a model to other nations harried by national disunity or dependent on foreign support strengthens the impression that domestic political considerations were at issue. Unity and independence are at the core of his national policy for France, and his references to the plight of divided countries are aimed at driving home to his compatriots the virtue of unity.

6. Partly because of a language difficulty, this aspect was misunderstood by some American press services and by New York Times and Washington Post columnists. They misinterpreted "libre arbitre" as an offer of French "arbitration" to divided nations whereas De Gaulle was merely stressing the importance to those nations of France's example in exerting its own "free will" to achieve national unity.

7. Reiteration of the theme of national unity is particularly pertinent at this time. The

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unusually large portion of this speech devoted to economic equilibrium stressed the importance of national unity in achieving the goals of the recently instituted austerity program. The adverse political repercussions of this program, which will pinch most elements of French society, may be more intense in the intermediate, rather than in the immediate future. This possibility has already been considered as a reason De Gaulle might seek reelection well in advance of the constitutional deadline of late 1965. His opponents are already moving to close ranks on the assumption that elections may come as early as next spring.

8. If De Gaulle's intention is to hold elections soon, the Lyons speech can be interpreted as a major element of his strategy. The only threat to his reelection would be agreement by the main opposition parties on a single candidate. To keep his opposition divided he has evidently decided to make nationalism vs. internationalism the basis of his electoral campaign. The pro-Atlantic and pro-European integration elements of the right, center, and non-Communist left will not be strong enough by themselves to threaten his candidacy, and he can expect that their defense of NATO and the EEC will effectively block any chance that the Communists might rally to a single anti-Gaullist candidate. Moreover, France's extremely costly nuclear development program will be a divisive issue for the non-communist opposition of Independents, Radicals and Popular Republicans.

9. Despite numerous foreign policy references in the Lyons speech, France has recently refrained from taking any specific international initiatives.

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By proclaiming France's role as an example for less fortunate nations De Gaulle emphasized his interest in world problems without addressing himself directly to any solution. In sum, De Gaulle's desire to participate in global decisions continues to outpace his capabilities. His interest in propounding broad solutions for world problems is now being put to use for domestic purposes.

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